

‘Media surveillance of the natives’: A New Zealand case study—Lake Taupo air space

ABSTRACT

Research has shown news media in post-colonial societies such as Aotearoa New Zealand naturalise the colonising processes by which settler values and social organisation were imposed and the resulting marginalised status of the indigenous peoples. We explore these processes in news reports that claimed Māori wanted to charge for airspace over Lake Taupo. Studying headlines, the originating newspaper article, and subsequent television reports, we show how Māori were constructed as threatening the ability of ‘New Zealanders’ to enjoy the lake. That threat was constructed as imminent although the accounts included no direct evidence or identified source for the reported demand. We consider the one-sided coverage inaccurate, unbalanced and unfair, encouraging perceptions of Māori as hostile and disruptive social actors in our contemporary society. Wider implications of this media performance for this crucial area of social relations are considered.

Keywords: media representations, Māori, Pākehā, colonisation

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In modern, complex, fragmented societies, no one can hope to know the other members of their community directly. The only *real* (sic) contact with others is, paradoxically, *symbolic* (sic), and rendered in the form of stories, both factual and fictional, in the electronic and print media (Hartley, 1996, p. 207).

WHILE contemporary colonial societies such as Aotearoa/New Zealand depict themselves as liberal, plural democracies, they are organised in fundamentally inequitable ways that denigrate and exclude indigenous citizens (Jones, 1997; Nairn, Pega, McCreanor et al, 2006; Tuffin, 2008). Settlers from Europe established institutions and culture saturated with theories of their own superiority (McCreanor, 1997) that disadvantaged Māori who became a marginalised minority in their own land. Settler media played an important role in the process legitimating the power, priorities, and practices of the colonial society (Belich, 1986; Walker, 1990; 2004). Studies of media representations of indigenous peoples in Australia, (Banerjee & Osuri, 2000; Simmons & Lecouteur, 2008), Canada (Harding, 2006), New Zealand (Barclay & Liu, 2003; Walker, 1990), and United States (Daniels, 2006) describe similar patterns. One is the assertion, that indigenous peoples receive special treatment or privileges—money, land and opportunities unavailable to other citizens—unacceptable in societies claiming to espouse equality (Daniels, 2006; ECOSOC, 2006; Harding, 2006; Nairn & McCreanor, 1991). Representations of indigenous people as lazy, improvident and violent, locked into primitive culture and language further reinforce the belief that the alleged ‘privileges’ are unwarranted (Moewaka Barnes, et al., 2005; Daniels, 2006; Harding, 2006; Simmons & Lecouteur, 2008).

Studies of New Zealand media treatment of Māori have shown that surveillance of their activities, organisations, and aspirations is a major feature (Hodgetts, Masters & Robertson 2004; McCreanor, 1993; Phelan, 2006; Walker, 1996). Pākehā perspectives and discourses of race relations pervade media constructions of issues and events involving Māori (Abel, 2006; Rankine & McCreanor, 2004). Māori events, people, and tikanga were marginalised and Māori routinely monitored for deviance with negative events being prominently reported using anti-Māori themes (Barclay & Liu, 2003; McGregor & Te Awa, 1996; Phelan, 2006; Ramsden & Spoonley, 1993; Walker, 2004; Wilson, 1990). Such surveillance is what Fiske (2000) termed ‘white watch’ and Harding (2006, p. 231) called ‘keeping aboriginal people “in their place”.’ Stavenhagen, reporting on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people in Aotearoa New Zealand, concluded that ‘These findings [...] highlight a systemic negative description of Māori in media coverage’ (ECOSOC, 2006, pp. 17).

Underpinning this regime of representation are discursive resources that assist speakers to represent events in ways consistent with commonsense ideological patterns (McCreanor 1993, 2005). Frequent use sustains their familiarity and authority for speakers articulating the dominant regime of representation. Clusters of widely familiar discursive resources draw on and sustain a standard story of Māori-Pākehā relations in which colonising processes are masked and Māori sidelined in Aotearoa New Zealand (McCreanor & Nairn, 1991). Themes include ‘Good Māori/Bad Māori’, ‘Stirrers’, ‘Privilege’ and ‘One people’ (McCreanor, 1989, pp. 91-93), each facilitating particular rhetorical moves for which ‘One people’ a local version of 19th century nationalist discourses (Anderson, 1991)—provides strong foundations within a nationalist frame.

‘Good Māori/Bad Māori’ resources enable speakers to categorise Māori, favouring those seen to fit with settler society, contrasting them to those seen as challenging settler practices. ‘Stirrers’ resources include terms like ‘radical’ and ‘activist’ (Phelan 2006), actions like claiming (land, money), threatening and demanding. Speakers opposing efforts to provide restitution for past theft of Māori resources, for example in Treaty Settlements, utilise ‘Privilege’ resources—the notion that Māori ‘have rights over and above those of the rest of the population’ (McCreanor, 1989, p. 92). These oft repeated, largely negative portrayals of Maori mean most people know their fellow, indigenous citizens in distorted ways (Harding, 2006; Hartley, 1996).

The use of ‘native’ in the title of this paper is intended to reflect this perspective on colonisation that underpins our analysis of one example of media surveillance of Māori. Our analysis shows how these well documented strategies played out in news coverage of an alleged desire by Ngāti Tuwharetoa to charge for use of the airspace above Lake Taupo.

Method

The items analysed for this article were part of a representative sample of 353 newspaper and 29 television news about Māori and Māori-Pākehā relations collected in late 2004 (Moewaka Barnes et al., 2005). Following best practice guidelines (Lacy et al., 2001), the sampling included a ‘constructed week’ (Riffe, Aust, & Lacy, 1993) drawn from September and October. The ‘news story’ that Ngāti Tuwharetoa wanted payment for commercial use of airspace above Lake Taupo was carried in eight newspapers and five

television bulletins and those items were subjected to three analyses. First we examined the grammatical structures and implications of the headlines and ‘introductory paragraphs’ of all newspaper items (Table 1). Second, we subjected the original article in *The New Zealand Herald* (Figure 1) to detailed analysis. Third, we analysed how the story was constructed in each of the television items.

Headlines summarise a newspaper’s approach to the story, shape readers’ understanding (Van Dijk, 1991) and, for many, provide the only information they have about the event. To be brief and eye-catching headline writers favour statements that embody an impersonal authority, such unattributed statements—technically ‘exnominated’—read like unchallengable, objective statements of reality (Fiske, 1987). The introductory paragraph (intro) summarises the theme or angle the writer presents as the core of the story (Tucker, 2001).

As the item in *The New Zealand Herald* (7 October 2004) was the primary source for the other newspapers and television accounts we examined how the writer had structured it with particular emphasis on how its status as fact was constructed. Other papers shortened the original story and no newspaper quoted any new sources. To assist readers paragraphs in Figure 1 are numbered and referenced in our text [3].

Television items were transcribed and segmented by shot or speaker changes, and included descriptions of the on-screen visual elements since:

speech on television mostly gains its effect within a context ‘guaranteed’ by the image (Corner, 1995, p. 50).

Quotes are located within items by the time from its beginning, eg. [17sec].

Findings

1. Newspapers

Six headlines were declarative statements asserting or implying Māori were demanding payment for ‘airspace’ or ‘air rights’. Two papers slightly softened that demand, *Daily Post*, made it a question and *Waikato Times*, a customer’s inquiry (Table 1). Six identified the protagonist as ‘Māori’ (*Daily Post*, *Hawkes Bay Today*) or ‘Tribe’ (*Bay of Plenty Times*; *Greymouth Evening Star*; *Gisborne Herald*; *New Zealand Herald*). The message varied

Table 1: Lake Taupo airspace stories

Newspapers	Headline	First paragraph
<i>Bay of Plenty Times</i> (p 4)	Tribe wants cash for use of airspace	Māori want to charge for the use of airspace above Lake Taupo ...
<i>Greymouth Evening Star</i> (p3)	Tribe wants payment for air rights	The Government is to enter negotiations with central North Island tribe Tuwharetoa over property rights ...
<i>Gisbourne Herald</i> (p6)	Tribe wants to charge fee for Lake Taupo airspace.	The Government is to enter negotiations with central North Island tribe Tuwharetoa over property rights ...
<i>Daily Post</i> (p 1)	Māori to charge airspace	Māori want to charge for use of airspace above Lake Taupo ...
<i>Hawkes Bay Today</i> (p1)	Māori want fee for Lake Taupo airspace	Māori want to charge for use of airspace above Lake Taupo ...
<i>Nelson Mail</i> (p2)	Airspace fees bid	The Government is to enter negotiations with central North Island tribe Tuwharetoa over property rights ...
<i>The New Zealand Herald</i> (p 1)	Tribe: Pay us for air rights	Māori want to charge for use of airspace above Lake Taupo in a move that would cover floatplane landings, bungee jumping and bridges over rivers.
<i>Waikato Times</i> (p 3)	'How much is the air up there?'	Māori want charges levied for use of air space ...
Television	Channel	Lead sentence
<i>Midday</i>	TV One	Taupo tribe, Ngati Tuwharetoa, have revealed they are now looking to charge for airspace above Lake Taupo
<i>Prime News</i>	Prime	Māori want to charge for airspace above Lake Taupo in a move that would cover floatplane landings, bungee jumping and bridges over rivers.
<i>3 News</i>	TV 3	A bid by Māori to charge for air rights over Lake Taupo has led to a quick political reaction ...
<i>One News</i>	TV One	Suggestions a central North Island tribe could charge for airspace over Lake Taupo are being downplayed tonight by the tribe itself.
<i>Tonight</i>	TV One	A central North Island tribe which claims it may legally be allowed to charge for airspace over Lake Taupo says it will be sometime before that actually happens.

from the threatening “Pay us for air rights” (*New Zealand Herald*), ‘wants cash’ (*Bay of Plenty Times*), to a ‘payment’ (*Greymouth Evening Star*), a ‘fee’ (*Hawkes Bay Today*), or ‘to charge’ (*Gisborne Herald, Daily Post*) (see Table 1). Each, to differing degrees, cued the offence of demanding money with menaces.

Intros in five newspapers emphasised the purported charge ‘would cover floatplane landings, bungee jumping, and bridges over rivers’ (*Bay of Plenty Times, Daily Post, Hawkes Bay Today, New Zealand Herald, Waikato Times*). The remainder began ‘The Government is to enter into negotiations with central North Island tribe Tuwharetoa over property rights...’. Placing the alleged wish to impose a fee in the context of Treaty settlement processes and property rights could have provided an informative and balanced account of the issue. Instead, the negotiations were presented as the Crown responding to Tuwharetoa threats ‘to charge the Crown for all structures on or over the lakebed and riverbeds’ (*New Zealand Herald*, [6]).

Use of ‘Māori’ or ‘Tribe’ in headlines implicated Māori generally as threatening and could have easily been avoided by identifying those allegedly responsible. The headlines succeeded in implicating all Maori in a demand for ‘airspace’ payments depicted as impacting adversely on peoples’ ability enjoy and profit from Lake Taupo. Most intros began ‘Māori want...’ broadening or reinforcing the headline and named Ngāti Tuwharetoa in the second or later paragraph. After the iwi had been named all newspapers explained that Ngāti Tuwharetoa, are owners of the bed of Lake Taupo and some of its tributaries but not how that ownership linked to “air rights” or ‘airspace’.

2. Case study: *The New Zealand Herald* story

The New Zealand Herald, Aoteroa/New Zealand’s largest daily, led with the Lake Taupo airspace story, positioning it top left on page 1. Inspection of the 27 paragraph item (Figure 1) shows its layered construction. The headline sits above bullet-points that elaborate it. Centred amid the text is a montage of iconic Taupo images - the carved portal framing the view south over the lake to Tongariro, a bungee jumper in free-fall, a person attempting to hit the ‘Hole-In-One’ on the floating green. Below that is a précis of agreements and disagreements between the Crown and Ngāti Tuwharetoa concerning the lake.

The secretary of the Tuwharetoa Māori Trust Board [10] and MP Georgina Te Heuheu [11-12] were approached but neither would discuss board business

Figure 1: The New Zealand Herald story

Tribe: Pay us for air rights

■ Iwi says Taupo deal allows it to charge

by Anne Boston

Māori want to charge for the use of air space above Lake Taupo in a move that would cover floatplane landings, bungy jumping and bridges over rivers.

Ngāti Tuwharetoa believe that an agreement which gave them ownership of the Taupo lakebed and the bed of its tributaries and streams entitles the Tuwharetoa Māori Trust Board to charge a licence fee to commercial operators.

The tribe makes about \$1 million a year from an existing fee system.

Under that arrangement, the Department of Internal Affairs and Conservation charge licence fees for boat ramps, trout fishing, charter boats and fees for marina berths and moorings.

The proceeds are split 50:50 between the Crown and the tribe.

But the board has long been unhappy with the amount it makes from this deal, and is now threatening to charge the Crown for all structures on or over the lakebed and riverbeds.

That could include bridges over rivers and excluded from the 1992 'deed of settlement' agreement with the Government. It could affect the Hole-in-One

■ Floatplane, bungy, bridges face toll



>> The lake deals

- Crown and Tuwharetoa agreed to guarantee access for the public to Lake Taupo and its fishery in 1926.
- Tuwharetoa later disputed the agreement, saying the lake and its waters were not part of it.
- In 1992, the National Government and Tuwharetoa signed a 'deed of settlement' giving ownership of Lake Taupo and its waters to the tribe.
- Under this, Tuwharetoa get half of all Taupo fishing licence money and revenue from ramp, marina and mooring charges.

golf driving range on the lakeshore near the town. Taupo Bungy Government 12 months ago to

■ Threat to cancel jetty; wharf licences

paramount chief Tumu te Heuheu, said she could not comment on

"My tribe would not appreciate my discussing it needlessly when it's the gays at home that manage it," she said.

But Conservation Minister Chris Carter said that naming the negotiators "aid a host of complex issues" was involved. "I am not going to jeopardise negotiations by making any further comment in this stage," he said.

Taupo Bungy got a five to the Taupo District Council because it is on reserve land, cutting Tuwharetoa out of any revenue.

But the board believes that when people jettie they use the air space above the Waikato River and so should be charged.

Taupo Bungy director Alistair MacDonald referred the Herald to the community environmental manager, who would not comment.

The charging argument potentially affects other commercial activities because the Deed of Settlement guarantees free public access.

The tribe is understood to be getting its half share of trout fishing licence money administered by the Department of Conservation and worth around \$1.6 million a year.

but it is not happy with the system for boat ramps and launching

ramps, jetties and wharves administered by the Department of Internal Affairs and worth about \$400,000 a year.

Taupo District councillor Shamus Howard, a member of the Taupo-māori-council management board which works with Tuwharetoa to manage the lake and consider commercial proposals, said present fees were low.

Marina berths were about \$1,000 a year and a licence to operate a commercial vessel was about \$300 a year. Boat ramp fees were about \$45 a year.

Taupo's floatplane owner Allen Campbell said his company paid boat fees of about \$400 a year while the place was on the water, aviation charges and berthing fees.

"I don't think the fees as they stand at present are quite fair," he said.

"I don't think the tribe board got any of the best of the deal," he said.

"I think the Māoris do pretty well out of this."

New Zealand Herald, October 7, 2004. Front page lead; pictures reduced to fit.

nor did they provide any basis for the allegations about Tuwharetoa intentions. The story included no quote, paraphrase, or reference to any Tuwharetoa source or document supporting the assertions made nor did it allude to such a source. Despite lacking evidence the item repeatedly stated that Tuwharetoa had said they wanted payment for 'air rights'.

The article masked the unfounded nature of the story in three ways. First, agents— 'Māori' [1, 26], 'tribe' [headline, 3, 5, 20] and 'board' [Tuwharetoa Māori Trust Board] (2, 6, 9, 17)—were presented as acting like 'Stirrers', disrupting aspects of existing race relations at the expense of other New Zealanders. The board was said to 'want to charge' [1, 2], to have 'approached the government' [8], and 'now threatening to charge' [6, 8] evoking other instances where Māori have challenged an agreement with the government as in the first two points of 'The lake deals' (Figure 1). Talking of 'Māori' [1] and the iwi [bullet-point, 2] before naming 'the board' [2, 6, 8, 16] encouraged that conflation. Second, the numerous statements of Ngāti Tuwharetoa beliefs and intentions, for example 'the board has long been unhappy' [6], seemed to be factual observations. They are consistent with previously reported 'events' and grounded in Pākehā commonsense about Māori grievance and protest

(Abel, 1997; McCreanor, 1993; Phelan, 2006). Finally, non-Māori sources quoted were apparently responding to the board's demand and so appeared to confirm that the demand had been made. The district councillor who said 'present fees were low' [21] seemed to confirm the board had reason to be unhappy [6]. Similarly, the government appears to be reacting to an alleged threat to cancel licences for jetties and wharves [8] by offering to negotiate with the board 'next week' [10]. Having a minister lead those negotiations with their 'complex issues' [14] tells readers the 'threat' is being taken seriously.

The prominence, layout and organisation of the content of the article lent the alleged intention to charge for commercial use of airspace the status of fact despite the lack of evidence. The story drew on the theme of Māori 'Privilege' (McCreanor, 1989; Nairn & McCreanor, 1991), noting Ngāti Tuwharetoa currently has 'ownership of the Taupo lakebed and the beds of its tributaries' [2] and receives 'half of all Taupo fishing licence money and revenue from ramp, marina and mooring charges'. They are said to want more [headline, 1] and the proffered rationale—'Ngāti Tuwharetoa believe [the agreement]... entitles [them] to charge' [2]—was undermined by the exnominated statement that, 'The tribe makes about \$1 million a year from an existing fee system' [3, 19, 20]. Allen Campbell (Taupo Floatplane) provided a Pākehā perspective on this income stream, 'I think the Māoris do pretty well out of it now' [26]. The article is congruent with earlier stories in which Māori were depicted as demanding resources and disrupting life for other New Zealanders (Barclay & Liu, 2003; Walker, 2004). Without evidence that any demand had been made, the item gave the threat an apparently factual quality. Unattributed assertions that resonated with Pākehā commonsense about Māori 'stirrers' were augmented by quoted sources whose responses apparently confirmed those claims.

3. *Television*

Television journalists routinely scan daily newspapers searching for stories for the day's news (Ovens, 2001). Five bulletins included this item all accepting the print media version of the iwi intent to charge for commercial uses of Lake Taupo airspace (Table 1). In the first bulletins *Midday* [24 seconds], *Prime News* [46sec] the presented item appeared to rely heavily on the first paragraphs of the *New Zealand Herald* article.

Midday and Prime News

On *Midday* the newsreader said Ngāti Tuwharetoa believed their ownership of the lakebed ‘entitles them to charge bungy jump and floatplane operators a licence fee’ [13sec]. Closing the item, ‘the Tuwharetoa Maori Trust Board says it’s in discussion with the Regional Council’ [19sec] implied the iwi had already taken steps to implement the charging regime. With three minor changes the *Prime News* script was the first three paragraphs of the *Herald* item. Most important was ‘The tribe *already* makes about \$1 million a year from an existing fee system’ [22sec], that intensified the message the iwi do very well from the current agreement. In closing, the item reported comments from Dr Brash (leader, National opposition party), in which he presumed that Tuwharetoa were going to impose a charge even though he thought they should not be able to. That, like the speakers in the *New Zealand Herald* item, appeared to be a response to a public statement of intent. He lent further credibility to the alleged demand by asserting that it would raise the airfare between Auckland and Wellington. Both bulletins drew heavily on ‘Māori Privilege’ and elements of ‘Bad Māori’ in their reports.

Visuals

In these two items on-screen visuals accompanying the voice-over were, evidential (Corner, 1995)—picturing the lake and activities that would be affected by the proposed charge. *Midday* presented three postcard views of the lake and brief footage of a parachute overhead. Each—a small bay on the eastern shore, the western shore seen across the lake, and a foliage-framed view south down the lake to the mountains—emphasised the accessible beauty of the lake, emphasising the potential impact. Commercial activities dominated *Prime News* visuals—a single parachutist seen from above and bungy jumpers, inter-cut with shots of two parachutists and the plane from which they had jumped. It closed with two yachts silhouetted against the western cliffs, highlighting what was at stake.

One News and 3 News

As in earlier bulletins, no Tuwharetoa spokesperson appeared in either item. Apart from that similarity the two stories are quite different as indicated by the lead sentences (Table 1):

Suggestions a central North Island tribe could charge for airspace over Lake Taupo are being downplayed tonight by the tribe itself.—*One News* [127 sec]

Abid by Māori to charge for air rights over Lake Taupo has led to a quick political reaction with the government and National blaming each other.—*3News* [260 sec]

Alone among the items *One News* reported that Ngāti Tuwharetoa had ‘received a legal opinion that it would be well within its rights to make commercial operators pay for the airspace they use’ [10sec]. Highlighting that opinion divorced the Trust Board from the intent to charge—it’s a possibility they might consider. Later the reporter did say that Tuwharetoa ‘had discussed the issue’ but had ‘no plans to charge’ for ‘flying above its tribal estate’ [72sec]. Unlike the newspaper and earlier television coverage, this representation foregrounds legal entitlement and rational business practice, offering less encouragement for viewers to utilise ‘Stirrers’ and ‘Bad Māori’ resources in interpreting it. Further, the Crown negotiator, Chris Carter said that inadequate specification of property rights in the 1992 Deed of Settlement was the government’s main concern [88sec]. In this item, no-one spoke of Māori making a threat. *Tonight* presented a much abbreviated version of the *One News* item. In it the legal opinion was merely alluded to, the iwi said to be claiming ‘...it may legally be allowed to charge’ [3sec] and having ‘...discovered it could have the authority to charge’ [11sec].

In contrast, *3 News* asserted that there was a ‘bid to charge’ [1sec] and reinforced that assertion in two ways. It presented a lengthy account [107 sec] of political recriminations that presumed the claim had indeed been made, and it reified the Trust Board’s alleged action, paraphrasing the *Herald*’s second paragraph (Figure 1):

...but first the claim itself. It’s been made by Ngati Tuwharetoa who say that because they own the lakebed they should be able to charge commercial operators for use of the lake.—*3News* [10sec]

The reporter reinforced that position beginning: ‘Moves by local iwi Tuwharetoa to charge for anything on or above the lakebed...’ [26sec]. Both the newsreader’s ‘it’s been made’ and the reporter’s ‘moves’ asserted the reality of the alleged acts. Comments from two unidentified members of the

public reacting to news of the claim [36sec] emphasised that air is free and, for them, the proposed charge was unreasonable, linking to ‘Stirrers’ actions. Viewers were told the 1992 settlement gave the iwi about a million dollars a year and that the spokesman for the Tuwharetoa Maori Trust Board ‘would not appear on camera’ [76sec] though he was reported as saying ‘the matter had been blown out of proportion’ [84sec]. A comment that did not address the allegations.

Earlier the reporter had said the moves to charge ‘caught many people by surprise’ [32sec] but interviews with three commercial operators, Taupo Hole-in-One, Taupo Floatplanes, and Taupo Bungy, mentioned neither surprise nor alarm rather they anticipated discussing proposals with Tuwharetoa in due course.

‘I think we’ve established a really good relationship, one where I feel if there was any issues (sic) or they had any issues with us, that we could sit down and talk about those.’—Jo Hoogerbrugge, Taupo Hole-in-One [108sec]

‘We’ll get approached by the Tuwharetoa first if there’s any real issue, before it goes any further.’—Neil Kemp, Taupo Floatplanes [121sec]

‘I’m sure that they’ll work through this both Tuwharetoa and...and whoever’s involved.’—Darryn McClutchie, Taupo Bungy [135sec]

Positioned late in the item these speakers could make relatively little impact on the version of the issue already established by the newsreader and the journalist.

As with the *New Zealand Herald* item, the report offered no evidence that Ngāti Tuwharetoa did intend to charge for airspace use. However, the second section—politicians blaming each other introduced by John Campbell (162sec)—presupposed an intent to charge and appeared to confirm it. Political editor Stephen Parker reported that the 1992 settlement: ‘... gave ownership of Lake Taupo and its rivers to Ngāti Tuwharetoa...’ [167sec] and added Brash’s claim ‘that agreement doesn’t mean the tribe can charge for airspace’ [174sec]. Introducing a clip of the Prime Minister, Helen Clark, he emphasised the government ‘had been trying to keep the lid on Treaty issues’ [188sec]. Clark said the government had been aware of the possibility of a charge because of ‘issues left open’ by the original Crown negotiators [201sec]

and that the lawyers had been working on it. Her government's negotiator called it '...the sloppy deal the Nats [sic] did in 1992' [216sec]. Before Parker closed the item, there was a clip of Brash calling the alleged claim 'a try-on' stimulated by what he called the government-fostered 'impression that this Treaty is a living document which can lead to ongoing claims' [223sec]. Unlike the *One News* item this account utilised familiar elements of both 'Privilege' and 'Stirrers' resources.

Visuals

Throughout both items, visuals focused on Lake Taupo. Apart from studio shots of newsreaders and location shots of politicians, the lake was either backdrop to or focus of the visuals. Pans down or across the lake, bays, and waterfowl provided images of peaceful beauty and enjoyment with people sitting or walking nearby. Commercial uses represented by bungy jumpers, boats, a moored floatplane, and a parachutist featured in interviews with the operators. The visuals evidenced the equilibrium threatened by the purported charges and vox pop edits—'But the airspace is free' (*3 News* [40sec]); 'It should be everyone's airspace...' (*One News* [47sec])—underscored New Zealanders' relationship to the lake.

Discussion

Vital contextual information was omitted from these items. No story provided any detail about protocols governing negotiations between Crown and iwi. Failure to mention the expectation that details of issues and discussions must be kept confidential allowed writers to imply that Tuwharetoa was hiding something. No story provided readers with any legal or commercial explanation of the important connections between property rights and 'airspace'. The *One News* lead, referring to the legal opinion that the iwi would be within their 'rights to make commercial operators pay' [10] merely hinted at the relevant information. Instead, viewers had uninformed vox pop clips highlighting the unfamiliarity of 'air rights'.

This story reports an alleged threat to the status quo of untroubled access to and use of a major recreational attraction. In the absence of information about 'airspace' as related to property rights, the suggestion that anyone might charge for activities above the lake appeared outrageous. Consistent with notions of Maori 'Privilege' the iwi was depicted as benefiting from generous

Government deals and seeking to make money out of everyone's air above the lake. Generic identifiers implicated all Māori people and iwi, resonating with entrenched Pākehā depictions of Māori as privileged and grasping (McCreanor 1993; Nairn et al, 2006; Nairn & McCreanor 1991). The reports put words that had not been said into the mouth of Ngāti Tuwharetoa and told the resulting tale in a way that simultaneously made it very accessible and very difficult for readers to assess the quality of the journalism (O'Neil, 2002).

Like earlier media stories such as those about cultural safety (Ramsden & Spoonley, 1993), 'Maori Affairs Loan' (Rice, 1990), Auckland University Haka Party (Walker, 2004), Motua Gardens (Barclay & Liu, 2003) and the Ngaphui media ban (Abel, 2006) the initial high profile coverage adds to a Pākehā lexicon of 'facts' about Māori threats, acts, or financial untrustworthiness. Even when a story is subsequently shown to have been inaccurate or, as in this case, an emotive media construction, the delayed correction, plus common elements of vocabulary and storylines sustain sufficient credibility for people to remember much of the original as if it had been trustworthy.

This scare story is based on hearsay. In all the items analysed we could find no credible evidence of the Trust Board's alleged intent to impose a charge. Yet, with one exception, the reports read as if Tuwharetoa had publicly declared they intended to act on a legal opinion about their rights. No story told readers that making such a statement would have violated the confidentiality required in negotiations with the Crown. No journalist explicitly reported a source for the story, and only *One News* hinted that it was the Crown Law Office opinion that the iwi were entitled to charge commercial operators for use of their airspace. The absence of any cited source of or reference to authoritative evidence from within the Tuwharetoa Maori Trust Board, the alleged protagonist, made these stories more unbalanced than a 2003 Holmes item about registration of a wahi tapu on the Bay of Plenty mountain Kopukairoa. The Broadcasting Standards Authority upheld a Ngāti Pukenga complaint about that item, finding it unbalanced, inaccurate and unfair (BSA, 2003). We believe these stories, with the exception of the *One News* item, also violated standards of balance, accuracy and fairness (BSA, 2006; NZ Press Council, n.d.).

In 2007 *The New Zealand Herald* (11/9, 13/9) reported the outcomes of negotiations between Tuwharetoa and the Crown begun in late 2004. These items appeared deep within the newspaper and were similar to accounts of negotiations between the Crown and large commercial concerns, but it is hard

to imagine any major corporation tolerating publication of an unsubstantiated story like that analysed here. The 2007 reports had relatively neutral headlines: ‘Deal extends tribe’s rights over Taupo’ (11/9) and ‘Lake operators unfazed by fee’ (13/9), avoiding the scaremongering of 2004. The first summarised who owned what and reiterated the Crown Law Office opinion that the Trust Board is entitled to license and charge commercial users fees. Consistent with both the headline (13/9) and their 2004 comments, commercial operators were ‘happy to wait for details to emerge’ and expressed confidence about working with the iwi.

Conclusion

This is another instance of mass media depicting Māori as a threat to the dominant social order. We conclude that such representations occur because media practices and regimes of representation here work to benefit the dominant culture and reinforce the marginalisation of Māori. Journalism could make significant positive contributions to our development as a nation but studies show that coverage continues to provide all citizens with distorted knowledge of Māori as both citizens and tangata whenua. We support Rodolfo Stavenhagen’s call for media ‘to provide a balanced, unbiased, and non-racist picture of Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand’ (ECOSOC, 2006, p. 22). As a necessary initial step we encourage all media organisations to draw on the advice of *Pou Kōrero* (Archie, 2007) and *Urutahi Koataata Māori*, (Nga Aho Whakaari, 2008), for working with Māori content and Māori communities. Achieving Stavenhagen’s goal requires sustained efforts to identify and eliminate the commonsense ideological patterns that currently dominate both the selection of news stories and the way they are told.

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